

*In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, house fires and carbon monoxide poisoning have dramatically increased*

Hauppauge, NY – Today, Rep. Steve Israel (D – Huntington) joined the Commack Fire Department and Underwriter Laboratories (UL), an independent product safety certification organization, to urge New Yorkers to follow safety tips when using portable generators or cooking equipment. In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, with many people still without power and taking advantage of generators or portable cooking equipment, there has been a sharp increase in house fires and incidents of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Rep. Israel said, “I understand that, as we wait for power to be fully restored, many Long Islanders are turning to portable generators or cooking equipment. While they can provide much-needed relief, they can also pose a real danger if not used properly. As we’ve seen over the past few days, misuse can result in deadly fires and carbon monoxide poisoning. Today I’m warning everyone to follow safety tips and equipment instructions.”

Each year, more than 400 Americans die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning, more

than 20,000 visit the emergency room and more than 4,000 are hospitalized due to carbon monoxide poisoning. One generator produces as much carbon monoxide as hundreds of cars.

The following tips were provided:

NEVER operate a portable gasoline-powered generator in or near an enclosed space such as a garage, shed or crawlspace, or in your home, even if you open doors and windows to provide ventilation. Poisonous carbon monoxide from generators can kill you in minutes.

NEVER plug a portable generator into an electrical outlet in the home or garage. It can 'back feed' power into the utility company's lines – which can kill or injure utility workers fixing downed power lines.

Unless the generator is weather-proofed, it is not safe to use in the rain or snow unless under a pop-up type canopy. Ensure there are three to four feet above and to the sides of the generator. If you do not have a canopy, wait for the weather to stop and the generator to dry before using it.

###